

Message Text

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66/44

ACTION ARA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 L-02 SAB-01 SP-02 NSC-05 NSCE-00

INR-05 PM-03 DODE-00 /039 W
----- 070241

P R 271350Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6737

INFO AMEMBASSY PANAMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 802

LIMDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA 2)

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PN CO

SUBJ: AMBASSADOR MAILLIARD'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT LOPEZ:
PANAMA CANAL NEGOTIATIONS AND THE URRUTIA-THOMSON TREATY

1. PRESIDENT LOPEZ BROUGHT UP THE QUESTION OF THE URRUTIA-THOMSON TREATY AND COLOMBIA'S RIGHTS UNDER THAT TREATY, AND EXPRESSED HIS GRAVE CONCERN THAT THE CURRENT CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATIONS MIGHT BE CONCLUDED WITHOUT CONSIDERATION OF OR REFERENCE TO THE TREATY RIGHTS THEREUNDER. HE OBSERVED THAT PANAMA'S POSITION WAS QUITE CLEAR: THE GOP MAINTAINED IT WAS NOT A PARTY TO THE URRUTIA-THOMSON TREATY, HAD NO OBLIGATIONS THEREUNDER AND THERFORE DID NOT RECOGNIZE ANY COLOMBIAN RIGHTS. THIS POSITION COLOMBIA UNDERSTOOD. THE PRESIDENT OBSERVED WRYLY THAT PANAMA WAS ESPECIALLY SENSITIVE TO TWO COUNTRIES--COLOMBIA FROM WHICH IT WAS CARVED, AND THE US--AND CLEARLY WANTED TO DEMONSTRATE ITS INDEPENDENCE FROM BOTH.

2. AS TO THE US, WHILE THE TREATY EXISTED, THE GOC WAS NOW UNSURE OF OUR CURRENT POSITION ON OUR OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE TREATY AND THE RIGHTS GRANTED COLOMBIA THEREUNDER, SINCE NO
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EFFORT HAS BEEN MADE TO CONSULT WITH THE GOC. THE PRESIDENT WAS

PARTICULARLY CONCERNED BECAUSE A COLOMBIAN SENATOR WHO RECENTLY VISITED WASHINGTON WAS TOLD BY "STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICERS" THAT THE US REALLY COULD DO NOTHING ABOUT THE URRUTIA-THOMSON TREATY RIGHTS UNDER ANY NEW TREATY NEGOTIATED WITH PANAMA. THIS APPEARED TO BE A VIOLATION OF OUR COMMITMENTS, AND IT NATURALLY AROUSED QUESTIONS. THE PRESIDENT ADDED THAT ASIDE FROM THE SOVEREIGNTY AND NATIONAL DIGNITY AND TREATY OBLIGATION ASPECTS, THE RIGHT OF FREE TRANSIT WAS AN ECONOMICALLY IMPORTANT ITEM FOR COLOMBIA, PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD TO THE TRANSPORT OF SALT FROM THE GUAJIRA TO THE COLOMBIAN WEST COAST.

3. BOTH AMBASSADORS MAILLIARD AND VAKY EXPRESSED SURPRISE AT THE REPORTED COMMENT TO THE COLOMBIAN SENATOR. BOTH STATED THAT THE US RECOGNIZED THAT IT HAD A TREATY WITH COLOMBIA AND OUR UNDERSTANDING WAS THAT AS DISCUSSIONS OF NEW TREATY ARRANGEMENTS REACHED THOSE ITEMS WHICH WOULD AFFECT OUR CAPACITY TO COMPLY WITH THE TREATY, CONSULTATIONS WOULD BE HELD WITH COLOMBIA AND PANAMA TO SEE WHAT COULD BE DONE. AMBASSADOR MAILLIARD INDICATED HE WOULD BE HAPPY TO DISCUSS THIS POINT WITH AMBASSADOR BUNKER AND TO CONVEY PRESIDENT LOPEZ' CONCERN.

4. ACTION REQUESTED: AS THE DEPARTMENT KNOWS WE ARE FIRMLY COMMITTED, MOST RECENTLY IN A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY TO FOREIGN MINISTER VAZQUEZ CARRIZOSA (STATE 43580 OF MARCH 5, 1974) TO "CONSULT WITH COLOMBIA ON THE ISSUES RAISED BY THE 1915 TREATY AT THE APPROPRIATE MOMENT DURING THE NEGOTIATIONS FOR A NEW TREATY ON THE PANAMA CANAL". I WOULD APPRECIATE INFORMATION ON DEPARTMENT/O PLANS RE SUCH CONSULTATIONS AND INFORMATION AS TO OUR POSITION ON THIS GENERAL ISSUE. I AM ALSO DISTURBED AT REPORTED COMMENTS MADE TO COLOMBIAN SENATOR, WHICH I AM ASSUMING WAS SENATOR GUSTAVO BALCAZAR WHO HAD CONVERSATIONS WITH ARA/PAN OFFICERS RECENTLY. I AM SURE INFORMATION AS REPORTED IS GARBLED AND DISTORTION OF WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED, AND WOULD APPRECIATE INFORMATION AS TO WHAT WAS SAID.
VAKY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TREATY COMPLIANCE, AGREEMENTS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, CANALS, NEGOTIATIONS, URRUTIA-THOMPSON TREATY
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 27 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GarlanWA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BOGOTA00802
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750031-0766, D750029-0793
From: BOGOTA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750119/aaaaaqjc.tel
Line Count: 98
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GarlanWA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <22 AUG 2003 by GarlanWA>; APPROVED <22 AUG 2003 by GarlanWA>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AMBASSADOR MAILLIARD'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT LOPEZ: PANAMA CANAL NEGOTIATIONS AND THE URRUTIA-THOMSON TREATY
TAGS: PFOR, PN, CO, PQ, US, (MAILLIARD, WILLIAM S), (LOPEZ MICHELSON, ALFONSO),
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006